General Honors 101: Autobiography
Writing Lives

Session: Spring 2019
Instructor: Dr. Rahman
Section 29: TT 12:30-1:45 pm Simpkins 214
Section 30: TT 9:30-10:45 am Simpkins 214

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Office: Simpkins 224
Office hours: Tuesday and Thursday 8-9 am, Wednesday 10-noon

Course Objectives
In this course, we will study a diverse range of autobiographies in which authors write the story of their lives. Since autobiographies are often accounts of self-discovery, we will ask what these writers learn about themselves. How do they choose to represent their identities to us, the reading public? Do they depict the fragmentation of their lives, or do they insist on wholeness and integration? In addition, since outside forces shape individual lives, we will explore the ways in which family, gender, nationality, sexuality, and politics shape each of the lives we read about. We will also consider how the imagination and the life of the mind influences the life one leads. Throughout this course, we will ask ourselves what we can learn from each of these representations of human life.

Texts
Art Spiegelman. Maus I: My Father Bleeds History
Art Spiegelman. Maus II: And Here My Troubles Began
Maxine Hong Kingston. The Woman Warrior.
Gloria Anzaldua. Borderlands/La Frontera
Fawzia Afzal-Khan. Labore with Love
Audre Lorde. Zami: New Spelling of my Name

Methods of Teaching and Learning
Our class will function primarily on the basis of discussion rather than lectures. While I may at times lecture, this is not a lecture class. This means that it will be very important for you to come to class prepared by having read the material carefully. The success and quality of this course is in your hands. I will expect you to raise questions, make comments, agree and disagree with each other in a respectful manner. Our discussions will help you think more deeply about the texts and eventually write better papers.

- Take readings notes, marking areas to help you understand and engage the material.
- Consider not only the texts but also the larger issues they raise.
- Interrogate the concepts and assumptions made by the reading.
- **Bring 2-3 critical comments/discussion questions to class every class meeting.** *(Though I will not regularly collect these, I will spot check depending on class discussion.)*
- Good discussion questions should be open-ended, have multiple answers, and provoke discussion that helps us understand not only the work in question but also how the work
shapes our understanding of the topic at hand. Avoid questions that can be answered with yes, no, or some other simple sentence.

**Required Work**

This course will require regular attendance and active engagement with the issues under discussion and writing. The major writing requirement of this course will be 3 formal essays of varying lengths. I expect you to bring the rough drafts of each of your formal essays to class for peer review. I also expect you to hand in your rough draft and your peer's comments along with your essay so that I can track your improvement as well as your peer’s feedback. **I will not accept the three formal essays without a rough draft and peer's comments.** As a result, you must attend all peer review classes. Your final copy of each of the three formal papers should be examples of good writing.

I require that you **read before class.** Expect to read everything twice in order to understand enough to comment in class and ask questions. Your reading grade will comprise not only in-class discussion based on your reading for that day but also the quality of the feedback you provide for your peers based on your reading of their papers. Your final exam will cover all the material discussed in class since the beginning of the semester. It will consist of three sections. The essay section will be worth the bulk of the points. The other smaller sections will contain identification and short answer questions. I do not provide study guides. Note taking as you read before class and during class discussion is your responsibility.

**Breakdown of grades:**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Essay #1</th>
<th>Essay #2</th>
<th>Essay #3</th>
<th>Final Exam</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 pages or 750 words</td>
<td>4 pages or 1000 words</td>
<td>5 pages or 1250 words</td>
<td>covering 15 weeks</td>
<td>Peer review</td>
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**Grading Scale**

- A = 93-100%
- A- = 90-92%
- B+ = 87-89%
- B = 83-86%
- B- = 80-82%
- C+ = 77-79%
- C = 73-76%
- C- = 70-72%
- D+ = 67-69%
- D = 63-66%
- D- = 60-62%
- F = 59% and below
Class Policies

- I am happy to accommodate special learning needs. Contact me ASAP.
- Attendance and active participation are required. If you do not read the assigned pages before class, or if you are absent more than twice, or if you do not take part in class discussion in a way that shows me that you have done the reading, your reading grade will suffer.
- Under-prepared students may be asked to leave class. Reading and bringing course texts is part of preparation.
- Ethical and professional conduct is required. I expect academic honesty and collegiality in class.
- Feedback from you regarding the course is welcome at any time. Contact me, put a note in my mailbox, or speak to Prof. David Banash, chair of English.
- Keep all graded assignments. Keep track of grades.
- Late work is not accepted unless you have prior permission from me.

WIU Policies

- **Students with disabilities**: In accordance with University values and disability law, students with disabilities may request academic accommodations where there are aspects of a course that result in barriers to inclusion or accurate assessment of achievement. To file an official request for disability-related accommodations, please contact the Disability Resource Center at 309-298-2512, disability@wiu.edu or in 143 Memorial Hall. Please notify the instructor as soon as possible to ensure that this course is accessible to you in a timely manner.
- **Sex discrimination**: University values, Title IX, and other federal and state laws prohibit sex discrimination, including sexual assault/misconduct, dating/domestic violence, and stalking. If you, or someone you know, has been the victim of any of these offences, we encourage you to report this to the Title IX Coordinator at 309-298-1977 or anonymously online at: http://www.wiu.edu/equal_opportunity_and_access/request_form/index.php. If you disclose an incident to a faculty member, the faculty member must notify the Title IX Coordinator. The complete Title IX policy is available at: http://www.wiu.edu/vpas/policies/titleIX.php.
- **Student Rights and Responsibilities**: [http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php](http://www.wiu.edu/provost/students.php)
- **Academic Integrity Policy**: Scholastic dishonesty of any kind with respect to course assignments will result in an F in the course and will be reported to CAGAS. It is your responsibility not only to abstain from cheating but also to avoid making it possible for others to cheat. The submission of the work of someone else as one's own constitutes plagiarism. Academic honesty requires that ideas or materials taken from another source for use in a course paper be fully acknowledged. Multiple submissions, “when one intentionally or knowingly submits substantial portions of the same academic work (including oral reports) for credit more than once without the explicit authorization of both instructors,” are also a violation of the academic integrity policy. I will be happy to answer any questions you may have about this. You should also consult the University policy at [http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php](http://www.wiu.edu/policies/acintegrity.php)
- **Disruptive Student in Class Procedure**: [http://www.wiu.edu/policies/disrupst.php](http://www.wiu.edu/policies/disrupst.php)
Grading Criteria for Formal Papers
The final copy of your formal papers should be well-structured around a thesis, provide textual evidence for the argument and be written in standard English relatively free of mechanical errors.

An A paper is a tightly structured, well-written, nuanced argument which provides plenty of textual evidence to back up its claims. The first paragraph contains a clearly-articulated thesis with a roadmap briefly stating the points which will be elaborated later.

A B paper might provide a thesis in the first paragraph but the paper itself may not be as well-organized around that thesis. For instance, sometimes these papers do not clarify how each paragraph relates to the thesis. As a result, these papers may contain material that seems irrelevant. B papers are thus not as convincing as A papers.

A C paper might provide an argument that only reveals itself at the end of the paper. This kind of paper usually lacks a thesis in the first paragraph because the writer has not rewritten the introductory paragraph to match the final version of the paper.

A U paper is unacceptable. One reason for this might be that there is no thesis let alone an argument. Random thoughts are not a paper. Another reason might be that the thesis is completely negated by the paper itself. Or, sometimes too many mechanical errors will make it impossible for the paper to argue a thesis because the reader can’t follow the writer’s thoughts.

The U paper and the University Writing Center
The University Writing Center is available to assist you with general and specific questions on writing assigned in any discipline and at any academic level. The one-on-one assistance available at the Writing Center is valuable for generating ideas, talking about global-level issues such as organization, and even working through grammatical problems. The University Writing Center is located in Malpass Library (3rd floor, west side) and in satellite centers in Simpkins, Bayliss, and Tanner. Visit wiu.edu/uwc or call 298-2815 to schedule and appointment. Be sure to bring a copy of your assignment.

If you earn a U on either the first or second formal paper, you must meet with me to discuss how to improve. I will recommend that you go to the writing center for help in rewriting the paper, which will be due in a week. This will help you bring your grade up to a C. If you do not meet with me and rewrite within a week, you will receive the original F for that paper.

Tentative Schedule

Week 1: Definitions and Distinctions
15 January 2019: Introduction
17 January 2019: Smith and Watson, pages 1-19

Week 2: Asian American memoir
22 January 2019: Maxine Hong Kingston, The Woman Warrior pages 1-53
24 January 2019: Maxine Hong Kingston, The Woman Warrior pages 57-109
Week 3: Memory

Week 4: Collective Remembering
5 February 2019: Smith and Watson, pages 21-42
7 February 2019: **Peer Review; Essay #1 Rough Draft Due**

Week 5: Jewish American memoir
12 February 2019: **no classes**
14 February 2019: Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* pages 1-69 **Essay #1 Due**

Week 6: Autographics
19 February 2019: Art Spiegelman, *Maus I* pages 71-159
21 February 2019: Art Spiegelman, *Maus II* pages 1-74

Week 7: Acts of Witnessing
26 February 2019: Art Spiegelman, *Maus II* pages 75-136
28 February 2019: Smith and Watson pages 168-173

Week 8: African American memoir
5 March 2019: Audre Lorde, *Zami* pages 1-65
7 March 2019: **Peer Review; Essay #2 Rough Draft Due**

**11-15 March 2019: March Break; no classes**

Week 9: Biomythography
19 March 2019: Audre Lorde, *Zami* pages 66-124; **Essay #2 Due**

Week 10: Intersectional Identities

Week 11: Pakistani memoir
2 April 2019: Fawzia Afzal-Khan, *Lahore with Love* pages 43-83
4 April 2019: Fawzia Afzal-Khan, *Lahore with Love* pages 83-121

Week 12: Herstory
11 April 2019: Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* pages 1-61

Week 13: Chicana memoir
16 April 2019: Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* pages 63-120
18 April 2019: **Peer Review; Essay #3 Rough Draft Due**
Week 14: Poetic Memoir
23 April 2019: Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* pages 121-174; **Essay #3 Final Draft Due**
25 April 2019: Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands* pages 175-225

Week 15: Wrap-Up and concluding discussion
30 April 2019: Smith and Watson pages 63-79
2 May 2019: Review

**Final Exam**
Section 29: Tuesday, 7 May 2019, 1 pm
Section 30: Thursday, 9 May 2019, 8 am